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ABSTRACT

The lives of poor minority city residents demonstrate the diversity, multiple potentials, and vulnerability to external structures. In spite of the stereotypes of failure and the very real problems of the urban poor, there are many strengths among the so-called urban underclass and there are aspects of life that are successful and productive. In New York City some housing has been abandoned by landlords and taken by the city for taxes. Residents of some of these complexes have taken them over with the City's consent, developed management and rent-collection strategies, and operated successfully for some time. Study of aspects of these tenant-owned cooperatives provides keys to the resilience some urban residents display. Channeling human resources into tenant ownership created involvement and made these programs more successful than programs with less stakeholder participation. The experience of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation in its "Homebuilders" program confirms the importance of the hidden social ecological dimensions of the lives of the urban poor. An ecological approach to resilience focuses attention on the ways the inner city poor are coping and the strengths the community already has. Unlike interventions in which the program activities and desired outcomes focus on helping the target population find a new niche, programs that improve the quality and outcomes of relationships in the existing ecology are in effect changing that ecology. Programs with the most potential for the improvement of at-risk urban neighborhoods work with highly motivated participants, faced with the threat of real losses, and deal with the strengths and successes in the ecology to build collaborative relationships that respond to community demand. (SLD)

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Growing the Seeds of Strength
In High Risk Urban Neighborhoods

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Introduction

The images of unrelieved poverty and disfunction that are so prominent in the media and in public conceptions of urban life are a chief obstacle to effectively addressing the problems that do exist. These negative stereotypes harm city dwellers in several ways. For those who are poor and black or Hispanic, they feed a psychological and social sense of alienation. For better off urban dwellers of all races, they reinforce a national abandonment of cities as viable, indeed vital, contributors to the good of the nation. All urban dwellers suffer from public policies that erode the basic infra structure and services upon which high quality urban life depends and from lessened competitiveness based on these stereotypes.

Large numbers are the hallmark of urban life. In living populations, with large numbers comes diversity. At its best, the relationships among urban people offer variety and freedom of choice for individuals and the accomplishment of goals that capture economies of scale including the conditions of viability, and even flourishing, of people and activities too infrequent or complex to occur in smaller populations. The protean diversity of urban life in which people at once form specialized or local small communities, and at the same time experience and tolerate extreme "otherness" has been put forward by political theorists as exemplifying a non-exclusionary democratic ideal (Young, 1990).

At the same time, the coordination of effective relationships among large populations of people requires efforts beyond the capacity of most individuals, and thereby is more dependent on

the physical and social organization of time and space. This dependence on external structures means that the social and economic institutions that affect daily life - from the transportation systems that take us to work, to the legal and regulatory systems that define acceptable economic and social activities, to the libraries, schools, universities, and hospitals that support our mental and physical well being - all have magnified significance within the lives of individuals and households, and in our collective fortunes.

The lives of poor minority inner city residents demonstrate the diversity, multiple potentials, and vulnerability to external structures. The focus of this talk is on the volume and diversity of strengths among the so-called urban underclass, the means by which these can be identified and supported, and the collective impact of programs that successfully support these strengths, as well as the impact of those that undermine them. Academic theories, research-based problem analyses, and professionally designed interventions often obscure the aspects of inner city life that are most successful and productive. The institutional structures of research and program implementation not only define the nature of a problem and the possible solutions, they also often inadvertently problematize life for the target population in unexpected and unintended ways. Drawing on research in early education, homelessness prevention, and family self sufficiency programs, social technologies for problem definition, program design, implementation, and evaluation will be analyzed for their impact on community strengths. The concluding section of this talk will examine the economic and political viability of a strengths based approach to improving the lives of poor, inner city residents. Hypotheses about the characteristics of viable programs will be presented.

Images of Inner City Reality

Researchers and the media most often coin the terms and images that represent the reality of inner city life to the broader society and to policy makers. Phrases like the "urban underclass" or the poignant sentence "There are no children here" in themselves problematize the lives of poor inner city residents. While they capture significant portraits of reality as experienced or inferred by social scientists, it is the combination of hopelessness and generality that rivets the attention. These are the very qualities that obscure the diversity and resilience that nonetheless persists in the same blocks and families being represented.

My awareness of the problem of misplaced stereotypes grows out of my own personal journey into the "inner city" from a childhood in a small town in Texas. As researchers began to delineate the "feminization of poverty," my reading of statistics on income, housing availability and costs, employment opportunities, and child care options for minority female headed households led me to wonder how they even survived. In the tight, expensive housing market of New York City, where the waiting list for public housing has stayed around 200,000 households for a decade at least, I was especially unclear how these women and their children found basic shelter.

My research took me into a stock of housing in New York known as *in rem* that has been abandoned by the landlord and taken by the City for taxes. When I began my work, the buildings were routinely referred to in the media and in policy discussions as "abandoned," despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of households have lived in these buildings since the mid 1970s. The

research I expected to do was to document the pyramid of disasters that befell female headed households residing in this stock - and this probably could be done with enough research money, time, and practice at inducing respondents to go along with the agenda. However, my colleague Jacqueline Leavitt and I had very little funding and conducted all the interviews ourselves.

We quickly learned that this was not the story our respondents wanted to tell. First of all, for most, landlord abandonment did not drastically change the condition of their housing, which had been poor and deteriorating for decades. Since the late 1960's, some proportion of residents in such buildings had turned landlord abandonment into an opportunity to improve their conditions by collecting rents and running the buildings themselves. It was more the way in which the City operated to "save the buildings" that presented problems. Over the twenty years of ownership of a large *in rem* occupied housing stock, services, maintenance and security in City-owned buildings has been notoriously poor. Tenants and advocates had to struggle to get the City to establish a program giving residents the legal right to run their buildings and eventually to buy them as limited equity co-ops. Such a program was congruent with the City agenda of returning these buildings to the private sector, and so was adopted. However, it has never had the political or financial support of any administration equal to the support for reselling buildings to private landlords, or even for turning them over to non profit community organizations.

The impressive achievements of these tenants in the worst inner city neighborhoods and most dilapidated buildings has become the focus of a long term commitment to document their successes that has involved not only my colleagues in the Housing Environments Research Group, but also community residents and the staffs of housing advocacy and development organizations.

Since the first buildings were sold in the early 80's over 800 buildings with more than 2,000 units have been sold or are in the pre sale program. Surveys of 6,000 residents as well as numerous case studies have documented the success of the program. These buildings have been able to provide good building services, security of tenure, relative freedom from crime and drugs, and high levels of resident satisfaction in the most distressed neighborhoods in the city. They have also generated community leaders and increased civic involvement among residents. The records of the other resale programs are not nearly as good.

Over the 15 years that I have been studying this phenomenon, my own understanding of life in poor minority inner city neighborhoods has changed drastically. I entered the situation expecting to document distress and to offer policy suggestions for ameliorating the distress. Instead I have learned that amidst material distress, a significant proportion of low-income minority people exhibit remarkable psychological strength, social resourcefulness, and stamina just to survive. When some of the economic and social arrangements that form their daily obstacle course are removed, many are capable of collective action that significantly improves their material existence and enhances their sense of individual and collective worth and achievement. This does not mean that their lives are not marked by the greater ill health, lower incomes, and generally more precarious life circumstances portrayed in the statistics. However, the ways in which these poor inner city residents improved their homes and communities provide for me a key to the ingredients of successful, sustainable, and cost effective programs to ameliorate some of the serious and persistent negative consequences of lives spent in poverty. Not only are their lives better, but their legal ownership of their homes, despite regulations preventing them from selling them for a profit, has in a real sense

decreased their material poverty and enlarged their stake in a society in which the elimination of poverty is unlikely, and in which poverty is the biggest risk factor for "rotten outcomes".

The Social Ecology of Resilience

Certain aspects of the origin and development of the tenant owned co-op program in New York appear to me to have broader applicability in understanding effective approaches to the problems that beset poor inner city communities, such as homelessness, poor school performance and high drop-out rates, and teen pregnancy, with its many negative consequences for both children and mothers. If we begin our analysis of the lives of persistently poor urban households with the question of how they survive at all, we follow the lead of researchers like Norman Garmezy (1985, 1991) who have delineated the characteristics of resilient children. A number of longitudinal studies indicate that many children who are born into severe and continuing poverty, nonetheless go on to relatively successful and satisfying lives (Glueck & Clueck, 1950; Long & Vaillant, 1984; Werner, Bierman & French, 1971; Werner & Smith, 1977, 1982). In this talk, instead of focusing on the child and regarding family and community characteristics as the background that supports resilience, I will examine the ecological organization of resiliency.

Garmezy has identified three sets of variables related to resiliency among at-risk children: 1) individual factors such as high activity level, reflectiveness in meeting new situations, cognitive skills and a positive, responsive stance toward others, 2) warm, cohesive families or at least the strong presence of a caring adult, and 3) support in the community from, for example, a teacher, a church, a helping agency, which strengthens the childs' ties to the community. My research on how

residents cope with landlord abandonment places these factors in a different framework. It shows how shifts in the legally and economically defined relationships of poor minority residents to housing can provide opportunities for those who are resilient to reshape their immediate ecology so that it supports not only their own lives better, but also the lives of less resilient others.

It is my contention that this ability to reorganize the ecology is at once more infrequent in urban settings due to size and complexity, and more significant. In case studies of landlord abandoned housing, my research group has found that when control of and responsibility for housing is retained by entities other than the residents, some resilient residents do act to improve their living conditions. Sometimes those actions are directed toward tenant organizing which large sample surveys have found to be a statistically significantly predictor of better living conditions. However, tenant input is often restricted to either a protest mode or a somewhat superficial consultutative mode. Other times the more able residents either engage in legal battles with the owner or they move out. Obtaining legal redress is extremely time and energy consuming, and even when achieved usually only addresses the conditions of an individual apartment. Moving out reduces the human resources of the building, sometimes leaving only the poorest households, often including elderly or disabled residents, or those whose ability to organize their households effectively is the most limited. These constraints can be seen in survey data in the finding that tenant organization is greater in tenant owned co-ops and in the much higher ratings of living conditions. Interestingly enough, however, even buildings in with mainly elderly or welfare-dependent female-headed households, residents were able to achieve very good living situations when their human resources were channeled into tenant ownership.

A review of literature on resiliency, and on successful interventions in poor communities leads me to conclude that much the same dynamics are at work as in the tenant owned co-ops. Essentially, an at risk individual or family must find a context in which some one or several people, be it a family member, a paid staff member or a volunteer, change the target individual by creating better conditions for human flourishing while at the same time providing conditions in which those who are less able can learn to act effectively through interactions in which all parties are constrained to act responsibly in pursuit of group goals. Other studies, such as Lisbeth Schorr's important book Within Our Reach, have arrived at similar conclusions. What is different about my analysis is that I want to draw attention to the fact the intervention changes the habitat of the target person or family, it does not just change them. When the interventions are successful, the target person or family is able to find or create a different kind of habitat than that they originally inhabited.

However, in some urban settings, the ecology of every day life is strongly effected by larger forces be they the illegal drug market, the lack of adequate affordable housing, or intransigent, overworked, and counterproductive bureaucracies, or neglected public school systems. In these contexts, residents in at risk communities have to get control of some significant ecological parameters in order to bring about positive changes for individuals and households. These parameters include the physical conditions of their homes and their social relationships with others, including members of mainstream society.

The experience of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundations efforts to support a replication of the successful Tacoma "Homebuilders" program in the Bronx provides support for this assertion. In this program, professionals in social work, psychology or counseling worked with families

threatened with removal of a child by child welfare officials. Each staff member, responsible for only three families, guaranteed that they would respond to any problem the family had within twenty-four hours by working with a wide range of agencies and by being willing to deal with practical problems as well as more psychological needs. Case workers were willing to do whatever it took to help families get control of their lives, including scrubbing floors and finding spare automobile parts. Not only did families avoid the violent, abusive incidents that can lead to foster care, they also found jobs and got their homes in order sufficiently to prevent removal of children because of inadequate living conditions. As a result 92% of the children escaped foster care after six years. A longer term evaluation of the program found that it enabled 90% of the children served to stay with their families.

Schorr lists the following factors as responsible for the success of Homebuilders: 1) families were highly motivated by the threat of removal of a child; 2) working with families in their own homes gave the staff a more realistic picture of the problems they faced; 3) staff could spend enough time with families; 4) staff drew on a variety of resources; and 5) staff used a wide variety of helping approaches.

That hidden social ecological dimensions of the lives of poor, mostly white Tacoma families played a part in the positive outcomes of the Homebuilders project was not evident until the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the New York State Office of Mental Health sponsored an effort, known as the Intensive Case Management program, to replicate the program in the Bronx. The target population differed in that the targeted families were drawn from homeless families with characteristics that identified them as at high risk for repeat homelessness rather than from the rolls

of child welfare agencies. The 450 families included especially young and pregnant mothers, very young children, those who had never had their own apartments, and those with especially troubled life histories. The goals of the project were to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness, to increase family stability so that children could safely remain with or be reunited with their families, to assure that children attended appropriate school programs, and to link families to health care providers. The program was meant to be a task-centered, problem-solving approach to demonstrate the benefits of "focused, intensive, time limited crisis interventions with highly stressed families" (Greenblatt, 1994 p. 78). The Intensive Case Management program was accompanied by another Foundation program called Partners for Success that brought formerly homeless families together to define and solve their problems with the help of community based social service agency staff. The results of evaluations of both programs brings a different perspective to the strengths and needs of the families served in both efforts.

According to an independent NYU evaluation of 80 ICM families and 80 controls (Witzman & Berry, 1994), the Intensive Case Management Program had only a negligible effect. Most families met the program goals whether or not they were in the Intensive Case Management program. Even the intense assistance of responsive professional staff made little difference in well being of families faced with severe, persistent poverty, dilapidated housing, and neighborhoods rife with crime and drugs. Families rehoused in public housing had on average much better experiences than those in the *in rem* stock I have studied. However, when tenants associations or tenant cooperatives were involved, residents often were able to connect to the new community in productive ways.

Although not subjected to the same kind of rigorous evaluation, in part because the goals had not been so clearly defined at the outset, the Family Partners project appears to have been quite successful in supporting families to take control of their lives (Edna McConnell Clark Foundation Internal Memorandum, 1994). Several key differences seem to have emerged:

1) In ICM program goals were predefined as focused on the needs of individual families and program resources directed toward meeting them. The contextual problems that emerged could not really be addressed. In contrast, the Family Support program created new relationships and institutions in the community and changed the way the sponsoring organizations related to the community. Families defined their problems, their goals and their ways of addressing them. They received assistance that they asked for from the staff. Over time the staff became aware of the ways in which their agencies worked that did not really serve the needs of their clients. In addition, several of the agencies began to hire more people from the community on the bases of what they learned about community needs.

Greenblatt (1994), writing about the lessons from the two programs concludes the following:

> Family-centered implies a focus on understanding not only individuals within the family, but the whole family in the context of its social, cultural and physical environment. And, without a strengths-based orientation, it becomes too easy to focus only on the deficits of individual, families and communities, and to blame them for the social and economic stressors that emerge during changing political and social conditions. These lessons imply that while intensive social service supports are important to individual families, simultaneous intensive efforts are needed to stabilize and revitalize the communities where poor families live - efforts that involve comprehensive community development with a reinvestment in economic and human development. (p. 88)

I would add that when one takes a more contextual view, it is usually the families in poverty rather than the agencies that serve them that have the will, based on lack of alternatives, to take on the very difficult and intransigent problems that face the. They must be aided by linkages to human, financial and social resources from other sectors of society. But they can not depend on these agencies to define the problem or the solution in ways that match their experiences and needs, nor to deliver resources in the ways that they can use. It is a challenge to professionals to form real partnerships that can work. To do so requires a reworking of the practices of research and program delivery, as well as a change in the identity, practices and daily lives of professionals who participate. Such changes in themselves reformulate the social and material position of the poor, multiply disadvantaged families who participate.

Problem Definition

Approaches to the problems of inner city residents vary tremendously from those that blame the structure of society and/or cultural inequalities such as racism and sexism, to those who blame the behavior of poor, minority populations, or those who implicate both causes. What these different analysis have in common is that they look at the existence of the population studied as the problem. Most of those in the target population see things from the opposite point of view, given a problematic ecology, how can they survive, and sometimes, from their own point of view, even flourish. The aspects of life psychologists look at as outcomes, poor school performance, teen pregnancies, delinquency, criminal behavior, unemployment etc. are more likely to be seen by inner city residents as concomitants in the battle to survive and flourish, not as end points. Social scientists focused on negative outcomes tend not to pay attention to the error variance in their data

revealing the success of some households and individuals who manage to survive and flourish in socially acceptable ways.

An ecological approach to resilience directs our attention to the niches inner city poor find that support better outcomes, and to the interactions between them and main stream society that are mutually productive. Thus far, most psychologists who attempt this have focused on temperamental and family variables. Yet qualitative accounts of how these work very often include discussions of how the households organize their place in the social ecology of their community so that 1) their households are protected from harm, 2) children experience effective care and supervision and 3) they establish effective relationships with institutions of main stream society (school, jobs, etc.) that benefit both the household and the institutions they engage with (Garbarino et al.). For example, Garbarino and his colleagues describe how the family of a resilient child from a high risk community find a way to move her to a safer housing setting and to organize their social network to look after her in her travels from home to school. They also support her efforts at achievement in a school that provided adequate educational opportunities. What is left unexamined is the community context that determines the availability and entry requirements for safe housing, safe movement, and an adequate educational environment.

Fritz Heider, Egon Brunswick and Urie Bronfenbrenner have given us important tools to help us understand how poor inner city residents perceive and act in their environments that have been too little, or too unconsciously, used in developing approaches to prevention. Heider points out to us that in visual perception, people do not live in the world of the physicist. Rather, perception begins from the effect and works back to the cause. Social scientist, planners and policy

makers usually start out with an analysis of the cause of a problem and design an intervention based on that analysis. Unfortunately for many such efforts, the regularities in experience introduced by the intervention are too weak and\or incompatible with the manifold totality of experience to have the predicted effect. Beyond that, the perceptual offshoots of the intervention often seem harmful rather than helpful to the target recipient. For example, researchers (c.f. Imbimbo, 1996) often report that at risk populations fail to take advantage of programs designed to help them with child care, job finding, depression, etc. because, in lives over which they have little control they feel, as one of the participants in the Tacoma project stated, the last thing she needed was "someone else telling us what to do" (Schorr, 1988, p.158). This same participant became more cooperative when she told the Homebuilder staff member that her real need was to get her house in shape, and the staff member then helped her scrub the house from floor to ceiling.

Once again however, there is an ignored ecological dimension that separates the perceptions of participants from those of intervention staff: interventions are meant to be temporary. If we analyze this fact in Brunswickian terms, we see the implausibility of success from short term interventions in unfavorable ecologies. Interventions are aimed at reorganizing the "deep regions" of the person in order to help him or her develop more productive relationships with the external world. This is accomplished by intervening at the peripheral level of the person by changing the proximal environment through the delivery of programmed relationships and sometimes other resources. However, as Brunswick points out, effective action is keyed not merely to specific proximal cues, but to those that best represent the deep causal structure of the environment. Unless the proximal intervention is embedded in an ecology in which the cues presented have real

ecological validity, it is unlikely that the target person will rely on them as guides to behavior, and unlikely that actions based on these infrequent cues will have successful outcomes.

This brings us to Bronfenbrenner's contributions to our analysis: Human development is shaped not just by the face-to-face world of daily life, but by the physical and social ecology within which that life occurs, and by broader cultural patterns that define how resources and opportunities for development are allocated. Thus successful interventions must target the multiple layers surrounding the target individual. Many studies of the developmental effects of poverty and associated threats to well being reveal that if parents are able to absorb these problems without letting them effect their own psychological functioning or parenting, children will not suffer, even from such traumatic experiences as high levels of exposure to community violence (Martinez and Richter). Thus many successful interventions include the parents as targets, as well as the children (Coie, 1996; Schorr, 1988). One promising intervention with violence prone youth, for example, includes not only friendship support groups for parents and home visits, but also placement of the child in play groups with more pro-social peers. But again, these interventions are temporary unless they lead to a reorganization of everyday life.

Within an ecological analysis, the interveners as well as the target populations are subject to the deeper ecological organization of opportunity structures. The niches successfully occupied by interveners not only differ from those experienced by target populations, even when they are meeting in the homes and communities of the target population, operate under very different contingencies. For staff, the terms of their employment, such as working only so many hours for so much money, taking vacations, scheduling other duties, having the freedom to quit, etc. all tie them more firmly

to the deep structure of the existing ecology than to efforts to change it. Even when staff dedication is higher, the funding for interventions, and the social justification, is always that the target population will\should respond to the intervention by outgrowing the need for it. The case of one of the parents in the youth violence intervention project illustrates why this is often improbable. While declaring as most parents did that the most valuable aspect of the program was the attention children got, this parent also stated that the home visitor became her best friend. When this parent died of AIDS, she named the staff member the executor for her will. How, one wonders, did this staff member carry out this responsibility?

My own experiences and those of my research staff make clear to me that these kinds of challenges to make long term, more personal commitments to the people and circumstances that we study conflict with the everyday patterns of where we go, who we relate to, and what we do. They challenge the successful adaptations we have made to the culturally distributed system of resource allocation. For us, like the staffs of the Bronx social service organizations involved in the Partners for Success program for formerly homeless families, it was necessary to attempt to change our immediate institutional niche so that we could support continuous involvement, including the time between grants. We are not fully successful at this, and the toll on staff can be high. The experience of being in two differently organized meso-environments leads us to look at the impact of the underlying macro-environment on our work in new ways.

One approach is to study what might be termed "folk prevention," that is to look for solutions to problems that are working in at risk communities. The work I have described on limited equity low-income co-ops grew out of observations of the relative success of this tenant driven program,

compared to other housing restoration programs. Interventions in very different domains following this approach have also yielded some success. For example, researchers comparing interventions designed to improve early reading skills of at risk children found that children whose parents listened to them read were doing better. An intervention to induce other parents whose children were not doing well to listen to them read proved more successful than more pedagogically elaborate school based programs, especially for the initially lowest performing children (Maughan & Rutter). This outcome held even when the parents were not fluent in English and lacked literacy skills themselves.

The other lesson of the two examples above is that both running tenant co-ops and listening to children read strengthen the mutually productive bonds within significant social units sharing the same ecological niche. Unlike interventions in which the program activities and desired outcomes focus on helping the target population find a new niche, programs that improve the quality and outcomes of relationships in the existing ecology are in effect changing that ecology. Because the intervention depends mostly on community residents, it is not time limited nor seen as simply a step to a better life. It is rather a sustainable better way of living.

However, there are limits to the self-help approach. Residents of at risk communities confront monumentally demanding environments and require productive linkages to the resources of the broader society to change them. For example, tenant run co-ops can only succeed when the legal\policy structure supports ownership transfer, when funds for needed rehabilitation are made available, and when necessary training in long term housing management is provided. These requirements are not different than those for transfer of ownership to landlords or community groups, at least in existing programs and for buildings in weak housing markets. What is different is the

cultural interpretation of such programs. For example, the transfer of ownership to new landlords has historically been more costly than transfer to tenants. Yet it is perceived as congruent with the working of the market whereas transfer to tenants is more often spoken of as giving away property for economically non-productive purposes.

Public policies that actually give financial resources or legal rights to those who lack them can more fundamentally change the organization of deeper structure of the ecology. They can be more controversial, as in the case of welfare or food stamps, where recipients are often perceived as freeloaders. The social relationships involved in the transfer continue to replicate the dependency of recipients on bureaucrats, policy makers, and more generally tax payers. The same could be said of such well accepted transfers as social security and the home ownership tax write off. However, both have been interpreted thus far as rewarding people for their own efforts and encouraging commitment to socially productive lives. This difference should be considered in designing interventions and research.

Research and interventions in high risk urban communities will have a more beneficial impact on the ecology, rather than just the person if real resources and skills are transferred in ways that have ecological validity beyond the life of the study. For example paying subjects offers fewer long term opportunities than hiring community residents to perform research or intervention tasks that teach, recognize or support employable skills. There is often a link between identifying what is working in high risk communities and incorporating community residents as interveners and researchers. This is most obvious when the research first discovers successful community practices. However, this principle can be incorporated in the research itself.

For example, my research group has conducted community self-surveys of over 7,000 residents of high risk urban communities. More active residents are involved in the initial definition of the problem and review, pilot, and critique initial drafts of the questionnaire. Then a core of committed skilled residents are recruited, trained and supervised by our staff. They then recruit, help train, and supervise interviewers from the community. This approach recognizes existing strengths of community residents, provides training in new skills, pays them for their work, and supports responsible, goal directed relationships among them. The research team of HERG staff, community residents, and members of advocacy and development organizations forges relationships of mutual responsibility and respect that can be the beginning of small and larger changes in the ecology. A number of residents involved through this process go on to other jobs in organizations attempting to improve conditions in the community or as interviewers or staff on other community research projects. The personal relationships developed strengthen the long term commitment of researchers and advocates to the actual people in at risk communities. The results of the research are used directly by community residents to present to local planning boards, city councilmen, state assemblymen, etc. The survey process itself takes more informed community residents into the homes of those who are often isolated and hopeless and suggests that their opinions matter and their are options. The quality of the research benefits by the greater access community residents have to hard to reach sectors of the population. In the most resent community self survey in Brooklyn, housing organizers have used the survey to target buildings for particular attention and to develop new programs to help residents with their most pressing problems, for example workshops on how to get court orders for needed repairs.

In closing, I would like to suggest that prevention programs with the most potential for sustainable, long term improvements of the relationship of at risk urban neighborhoods to the deeper social, cultural, economic, and physical structure of the ecology share the following characteristics:

- They emerge from strengths and successes in the ecology

- Participants are often motivated by a conviction that circumstances are so bad they have nothing to lose

- The intervention requires personal effort from and offers significant rewards to community residents as well as project staff and includes people with a diversity of skills and needs.

- The structure of the intervention builds successful collaborative relationships and gives rise to new formal and informal groups and organizations in the neighborhood and across social divisions of disadvantage and advantage.

- Over the course of the intervention or program, participants should come to own the external as well as psycho-social resources needed to achieve the goals defined.

- Such interventions need public policies to make them work but are not defined by public policy.

- Such projects enlarge the social networks of poor inner city residents and offer opportunities for learning.

- They arise not from a sense of need but from a sense of capacity.

- They improve the physical, social, and political ecology of the community.

- Ecologically valid intervention tend to replicate by community demand rather than because they are mandated or funded as demonstrations.